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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups: World Programme of Action for Youth

Policies and programmes involving youth

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to Commission for Social Development resolution 55/1. It provides an analysis of three areas important to young people, namely, education, employment and gender equality, contained in the resolution and in reports on progress and developments in those areas. The report also highlights the initiatives undertaken by Member States, United Nations entities and organizations led by young people towards the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and concludes with key recommendations for consideration by the Commission.

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I. Introduction

1. The Commission for Social Development, in its resolution 55/1 on policies and programmes involving youth, requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report at its fifty-seventh session on the implementation of the resolution, including progress on the achievements and challenges in the realization of the World Programme of Action for Youth.

2. The present report includes information received from, among others, Member States,[1] the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development[2] and the European Youth Forum, as well from reviewing recent practices and policies by Member State contained in the voluntary national reviews to the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

3. The report contains an examination of the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to achieve better results for young people. In particular, it delves into the World Programme of Action in relation to employment, education and gender equality. Progress and developments in those areas are also reviewed. It also highlights the activities undertaken by United Nations entities and organizations led by young people towards the implementation of the World Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda and concludes with recommendations.

II. Implementing the World Programme of Action for Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to improve outcomes for young people

A. World Programme of Action for Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: interlinkages and the role of data

4. The 2030 Agenda is intended to reach all social groups, including young people, who are referred to both explicitly and implicitly in it. It recognizes the role of young people as agents of change and includes references to them in the targets and indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals. With 90 indicators identified by the Secretariat as being strongly related to youth development, improving the situation of young people is necessary for implementing the 2030 Agenda.[3]

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[1] Austria, Azerbaijan, Colombia, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Myanmar, the Niger, the Philippines, Qatar, Slovenia, Timor-Leste, Turkey and Uruguay.

[2] The United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development is led by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, its permanent co-Chair, and a rotating co-Chair (the International Labour Organization for 2017–2018 and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) for 2018–2019). The following Network members contributed to the report: the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the International Labour Organization, the International Telecommunication Union, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, United Nations Volunteers and the World Health Organization.

[3] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Available at www.un.org/development/desa/youth/.

5. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for young people is closely related to the implementation of existing youth-specific and adolescent-specific international instruments, frameworks and United Nations resolutions [4] that remain crucial resources for the development of policies and programmes concerning young people.

6. In particular, the World Programme of Action for Youth, which recognizes young people as a major resource for development efforts, has 15 priority areas,[5] which are covered to varying degrees in the 2030 Agenda or addressed directly in the Sustainable Development Goals. Several of those areas are stand-alone goals (i.e., the World Programme of Action priority on education is covered by Goal 4 on quality education), while others are considered together, such as health, substance abuse and HIV/AIDS, which are considered under Goal 3 on good health and well-being (A/72/190, para. 9). Consequently, efforts to implement the World Programme of Action would accelerate progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

7. The achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals depends on the localization of the 2030 Agenda to address national priorities and on the development of evidence-based national policies, including youth policies. Similarly, the mainstreaming of youth issues into broader policies and planning serves to address the multifaceted challenges faced by young people.

8. While the 2030 Agenda and other national, regional and international frameworks can provide the impetus for the development and implementation of youth policies, timely and accurate data and evidence are required to build effective responses to issues of concern to young people (ibid., paras. 17 and 20). In this connection, the global indicator framework of the 2030 Agenda provides additional opportunities to collect data on the situation of young people, including in areas that were not previously measured using the World Programme of Action for Youth indicators, to create a more accurate picture.

9. Nevertheless, age disaggregation is key to efforts to producing such data. While age-disaggregation is encouraged for all Sustainable Development Goal indicators, greater efforts and resources are needed to support national statistics and data systems to meet this ambition. The lack of robust demographic disaggregated data poses an even greater barrier to the development of evidence-based youth policies to improve the lives of marginalized and vulnerable young people, given that there are little data worldwide about the situation of specific youth populations, such as indigenous young people, young migrants and refugees, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people and those with disabilities. Without robust and disaggregated data, policymakers are given only a partial view of the situation of young people. This can lead to the development of policies that, although well intentioned, inadvertently fail to address or even divert scarce resources from addressing the challenges faced by many young people who are out of sight.

10. The use of reliable data in policy and programme design, implementation and evaluation has numerous benefits, including a better understanding of the situation of young people and the ability to track it over time, improved communication of policy and programme outcomes and allowing for better planned, timely, targeted and transparent interventions. The data can also help to enhance accountability, given that

[4] These include the World Programme of Action for Youth, the Global Accelerated Action for the Health of Adolescents (AA-HA!) framework, the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, the United Nations Youth Strategy and Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018).

[5] The 15 areas are education, employment, hunger and poverty, health, environment, substance abuse, juvenile justice, leisure-time activities, girls and young women, the full and effective participation of young people in the life of society and in decision-making, globalization, information and communication technologies, HIV/AIDS, armed conflict and intergenerational issues. See General Assembly resolution 50/81.

they can be used to hold governments to their commitments regarding youth development.

11. For data to be useful for measuring youth development, they must be timely, accurate, relevant, interpretable, accessible and coherent. Quality data on young people that are publicly available and easily understandable (by age, sex and geography, as well as any other demographic attributes) can lead to better designed, targeted and relevant policies and programmes. Access to such quality and localized data also makes the accurate monitoring and evaluation of evidence-informed policies on youth development possible.

12. The indicator framework of the World Programme of Action for Youth, developed in 2012, consists of 34 core indicators and 15 supplementary ones designed to be adaptable to national contexts. This framework could provide data on areas not covered or where disaggregation is not called for in the Sustainable Development Goals. The combined Goal and World Programme of Action indicators therefore provide a comprehensive resource for measuring and tracking youth development. In that connection, the statistical annex to the most recent *World Youth Report* collates global and regional data available for the 90 Goal indicators relevant to young people, as well as for the 34 core indicators for the World Programme of Action. It is concluded in the report that the vast potential of these indicators to measure youth development is constrained by data availability.[5]

13. Numerous tools and frameworks have been developed to improve the collection and measurement of data on youth development and have contributed to the availability of data on young people. For example, the Commonwealth secretariat's global Youth Development Index, developed in 2016, measures progress in youth development in 183 countries based on 18 indicators. The Youth Development Index of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, launched in July 2017, uses various indicators closely related to the Association's workplan on youth for the period 2016–2020, and serves as an instrument for evidence-based policy formulation in the region and in the planning of new interventions and programmes for young people. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) adolescent country tracker is an outcome-based framework and a proposed set of indicators closely linked to the Sustainable Development Goals. Lastly, the Youth Progress Index[6] is the first-ever tool to measure the quality of life of young people and provide scores to various countries based on their performance in the Index's three main categories that measure basic human needs, foundations of well-being and opportunity.

B. Progress in the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth

1. New national youth policies or issue-specific youth policies, programmes and legislation

14. In line with the World Programme of Action for Youth and 2030 Agenda, some governments demonstrated sustained commitment to supporting the needs and aspirations of young people and to responding to the issues facing them in their communities by adopting or revising youth policies, strategies, action plans or

[6] A joint initiative of European Youth Forum, Deloitte, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the Social Progress Imperative, in collaboration with the International Organization of Employers.

legislation on young people.[7] Others are in the process of doing so.[8] Efforts have also been undertaken to measure and evaluate those policies and to strengthen data disaggregation to better capture the situation of young people, such as in Ireland and the Netherlands.

15. United Nations entities and civil society stakeholders have contributed to these efforts by providing policy support, resources or technical assistance to Member States for the development of national youth policies, action plans, related frameworks or legislation.[9]

16. In some instances, in which national youth policies are not in place, Member States have developed sectoral youth-related policies at the local, regional and national levels in health, transport and participation, as well as in education, employment and gender and the empowerment of women, which are highlighted in the sections below.

17. Member States have also continued to mainstream youth development into a broader range of other sectoral policy frameworks, including health, social inclusion, security and the prevention of extremism, as well as into sustainable development policies and programming by creating mechanisms such as inter-agency or interministerial committees on young people. For example, Indonesia's Presidential Decree No. 66/2017 on strategic cross-sectoral coordination for youth development was designed to strengthen coordination among ministries and related institutions for the implementation of the country's legislation on young people. Other Member States, such as Cyprus, have established intragovernmental coordination committees to develop youth-related policies, strategies or action plans.

18. Other types of youth development frameworks, including regional ones, continue to offer guidance on national youth policies, and Member States have aligned and coordinated their policies with those of regional bodies or organizations. The Ibero-American Youth Pact, a framework and alliance for developing policies, programmes and initiatives by the International Youth Organization for Ibero-America for young people, was signed in 2016.[10] The European Union plans to adopt a new youth strategy for the period 2019–2027, with three main areas of action, namely, youth participation, volunteering and solidarity and youth work, upon the end of its current strategy in 2018. With regard to regional development cooperation to enhance youth policies, the Youth Inclusion project, co-financed by the European Union and implemented by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, has been analysing policies for young people in several developing and emerging economies and produced a toolkit on evidence-based policymaking for the well-being of young people.[11]

19. Member States have worked to include or mainstream youth development into national sustainable development efforts. For example, Hungary included youth

[7] Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, the Comoros, Cyprus, Greece, Indonesia, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Malawi, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Myanmar, the Philippines, the Republic of Moldova, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste and Uganda.

[8] Albania, Austria, Croatia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Kenya, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Qatar and the United Republic of Tanzania, as well as Kosovo, which reference shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

[9] Including in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Kiribati, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Montenegro and Somalia.

[10] The International Youth Organization for Ibero-America comprises 21 member countries in the Americas and Europe.

[11] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Evidence-based Policy Making for Youth Well-being: A Toolkit* (Paris, 2017).

development in its national strategy on sustainable development, and, in the light of the importance of young people in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the Ministry of Youth in Azerbaijan has engaged in national coordinating efforts and councils for sustainable development. South Africa adopted its Integrated Youth Development Strategy and Plan, which is both an implementation plan of its National Youth Policy (2020) and a mainstreaming, coordination and monitoring tool to ensure that youth development is integrated into all policies in all sectors. Zimbabwe held a two-day seminar in 2018 on the mainstreaming of young people into various government policies, which led to the identification of several concrete measures such as the designation of a youth focal point in each ministry.

2. Enabling environments for youth participation, including to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals

20. Given that the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals require the participation of young people, youth-led and youth-focused organizations and many Member States have created enabling environments for the engagement of young people by establishing national youth structures and councils, participatory mechanisms for young people and consultations with them through organized youth structures, discussion platforms and online avenues. Governments have also strengthened coordination regarding young people,[12] including by establishing youth policy advisory councils. At the global level, a growing number of countries incorporate youth delegates in their delegations into intergovernmental processes, including the high-level political forum on sustainable development, and establish youth delegate programmes to ensure a more lasting policy impact year-round.

21. Youth-led initiatives are supporting the realization of the 2030 Agenda around the world, including in Australia and Ireland, where young people are mobilizing to advance the Sustainable Development Goals in the country and abroad. In addition, governments have continued to ensure the participation of young people in their efforts regarding the Goals, including in Egypt, which formed a group of students from various universities throughout the country to raise awareness of sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda, thereby increasing the engagement of young people in the follow-up and review processes. Effective follow-up and review, including through voluntary national reviews, is important for continued action and progress in achieving the Goals, and some countries, such as Hungary and the Netherlands, have invited young people to take an active role in the process. Slovenia included a report from the Slovenia National Youth Council and the participation of a United Nations Youth Delegate in its voluntary national review in 2017, while the United Nations Youth Delegates of Ireland also drafted a report, entitled *Generation for Change: Spotlight Report on Young People, the Sustainable Development Goals and Ireland 2018*, on a youth perspective on the country's voluntary national review and presented it at the 2018 high-level political forum on sustainable development.

III. Focus areas

A. Education and skills development

22. At the global level, progress towards achieving universal primary education continued, and there was increased demand for secondary schooling. At the regional level, however, deep disparities remain, with secondary and tertiary enrolment lower

[12] Albania, the Comoros, France, Germany, Kenya, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Pakistan, the Republic of Moldova, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Uganda.

in many developing countries, in particular in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, than in other regions, including Europe and North America. Member States have continued to highlight the complementarity of non-formal education to develop young people's full and lifelong education and have promoted access to it, in addition to ongoing efforts to ensure access to formal education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

23. There is growing awareness of the need for education systems to adequately prepare young people for the future and ensure their acquisition of the relevant skills needed in a rapidly changing workplace.[13] At the national level, efforts have been made towards the achievement of target 4.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals on relevant skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. Efforts have also been made by some Member States to develop national strategies to deliver education systems that are responsive to future labour market needs (Ireland and Romania), while others introduced curriculum reforms to integrate twenty-first century skills and competencies into the national curriculums at all education levels (Albania, Austria and Mexico).

24. Skills development programmes to improve the employability of jobseekers by offering practical assistance, including soft skills, were introduced (Bahamas, Ecuador, Ireland and Hungary) and helped countries to generate appropriately skilled workers. To facilitate the school-to-work transition, Member States have adopted or are developing technical and vocational education and training policies and programmes, which play a crucial role in equipping young people with practical knowledge, skills and competencies for work, and provided education that helps to bridge the school-to-work transition (e.g., Chile, Greece, Latvia, Namibia and Sri Lanka). Lebanon launched a National Strategic Framework for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, with the support of UNICEF and the International Labour Organization (ILO), while Cambodia developed a stand-alone National Technical Vocational Education and Training Policy for the period 2017–2025 to support its industrial sector development and decent job creation. Pakistan developed its first-ever technical and vocational education and training policy, which includes, as its first objective, a focus on youth employment. Difficulties, however, in ensuring that technical and vocational education and training policies and initiatives respond to market needs endure, on the basis of the lack of data or the use of outdated information on economic needs and sectors in which opportunities exist.

25. To contend with the rapid pace of technological development, recent policy frameworks have placed an emphasis on the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in education, especially for Member States that are moving towards more knowledge-based economies (Botswana, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda and Zimbabwe). Other Member States have advanced their technology education agenda by focusing on the competent and responsible use of ICT and the creation of digital learning environments (Italy, the Republic of Korea and Singapore). In the context of increasing competition in global markets, national strategies for higher education have been established, with a strong focus on innovation, research and entrepreneurship (Hungary, Ireland and the United Arab Emirates).

26. While skills development for the world of work constitutes a priority in education policies, ensuring the acquisition of basic skills remained a challenge for numerous Member States, where adolescents and young adults are not meeting minimum standards in reading and mathematics. In the face of a global learning crisis, strengthening basic literacy and numeracy skills and improving the quality of learning

[13] Cynthia Lunn Scott, "The futures of learning 2: what kind of learning for the 21st century?", Education Research and Foresight Working Papers (Paris, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2015).

through early preparation, teacher training and learning assessment were identified as priority areas in several national policies of Member States (Australia, Malta, the Niger, Togo and Zambia).

27. Inclusive formal and non-formal education allows individuals to grow and develop through quality learning, regardless of sex, social origin, language, economic situation or ability. Fostering inclusive educational environments requires reaching excluded and marginalized young people through the implementation of inclusive policies and programmes that eliminate barriers and lead to the participation of and respect for the diverse needs of young people. Disparities, however, in youth education in terms of socioeconomic background, urban-rural divide, ethnic origin and gender remain widespread.

28. Intensified efforts targeted at young people at higher risk of marginalization, including those with disabilities, indigenous young people, rural young people, young people living in poverty, migrant and refugee young people and young women and girls, are therefore needed to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4. To ensure that "no one is left behind", it is critical that inclusion and equity in education remain key policy goals for Member States, as they have in examples shared by Chile and Ghana. As part of its National Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education for the period 2018–2022, Japan implemented reforms to ensure financial support for those in need, including a reduction in the financial burden on low-income families for education in non-mandatory levels. Australia has provided loans with payment deferral until after graduation and funded rural and regional enterprise scholarships to support students from rural and remote areas.

29. Some Member States have developed special orientation, language, culture or labour market integration classes for young asylum seekers and refugees in "receiver" countries. In Austria, targeted language support courses for foreign students and refugees were provided in schools, while Greece created reception classes for refugee and migrant students in public schools in areas characterized as zones of educational priority. In Lesotho, a mobile digital library project was relaunched and provided access to information and knowledge for its particularly disadvantaged rural communities.

30. The promotion of gender equality in education, especially through increasing the participation of girls and young women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education, became a focus area in several national agendas, including in Australia and Malaysia. The Gambia has an increasing focus on the improvement in the employable skills of and job opportunities for women and girls by ensuring access to primary, secondary and tertiary education.

31. Quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all are central to ensuring a full and productive life for all individuals and for the realization of sustainable development. In this regard, quality assurance in higher education has gained significant momentum worldwide, and new quality assurance models have been adopted at the higher education level (Chile and Sweden). Some countries have intensified their efforts to improve both school infrastructure and teacher qualifications (Austria, Chile, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Mexico and Sweden).

32. To ensure that education is linked to national environment priorities and sustainable development more broadly, Member States have increasingly championed education for sustainable development initiatives and programmes, including the World's Largest Lesson initiative, produced by Project Everyone delivered in partnership with, among others, UNICEF, to promote the Sustainable Development Goals among young people (Australia, Bhutan, Hungary and Madagascar). In Egypt, the Sustainable Development Action initiative adopted an integrated approach

towards sustainable awareness and education to empower young people as sustainability ambassadors, while Ireland adopted a National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development for the period 2014–2020 to ensure that education contributes to sustainable development and that young people are empowered as informed and active citizens.

33. Global citizenship education has been promoted through curriculum reforms and training programmes (the Gambia and Ghana) and through human rights education programmes (Madagascar). To encourage peaceful coexistence among communities in Kenya, a peace education programme was implemented, which included the strengthening of teachers' capacity for promoting values and the use of transformative pedagogy to foster peace-promoting behaviour among learners.

34. To address the educational needs of children and young people in emergency situations, Member States have provided assistance to international initiatives such as the Education Cannot Wait Fund and committed themselves to including education as part of their development assistance. Cuba has shared its experiences on literacy and its literacy method with other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Ireland, through the Irish Aid Development Education Strategy for the period 2017–2023, encourages nationals to reflect on their roles and responsibilities as global citizens and to take action for a fairer and more sustainable future.

B. Employment

35. While the global economy has recovered, high rates of youth unemployment persist. With an estimated 70.9 million young people unemployed in 2017, the youth unemployment rate remains twice that of the total unemployment rate,[14] and that number is expected to rise to 71.1 million in 2018.[15] Member States in various regions and at different economic development stages, including Albania, Australia, the Bahamas, Bhutan, Cabo Verde, Egypt, Greece, Ireland, Mali, Lebanon, Namibia, Spain and Sri Lanka, identify a variety of challenges in relation to youth development, often underscoring the formidable problem of stubbornly elevated rates of youth unemployment.

36. Combating disproportionately high rates of youth unemployment at the national level, as well as disparities in youth employment levels within countries, specifically between rural and urban areas, therefore remains a priority for Member States as they implement their commitments to youth development under the World Programme of Action for Youth and the 2030 Agenda. To challenge lacklustre youth employment levels, Member States have been creating jobs in the green economy, including for young people (Cambodia, Canada and Greece), which presents high potential for growth, in particular in rural areas (e.g., in Rwanda).

37. Member States are paying special attention to young people not in education, employment or training and have developed targeted inventions to encourage their reintegration, including through regional programmes such as the European Union's Youth Guarantee (e.g., in Malta).

38. Securing employment remains a challenge for young people, with short-term contracts, unpaid or low-paid internships and part-time work often seen as a key path to the labour market. When young people can find jobs, high rates of underemployment, vulnerable employment and informal employment are widespread,

[14] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Promoting Inclusion through Social Protection. Report on the World Social Situation 2018. Executive Summary* (New York, 2018).

[15] International Labour Organization, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2017: Paths to a Better Working Future* (Geneva, 2017).

leaving many young people in situations of working poverty or in jobs that have limited access to social protection and adequate labour standards. This is particularly striking in emerging economies and in the developing world, where 39 per cent of young workers live in situations of moderate or extreme poverty, earning less than $3.10 a day.[15]

39. Many young people hold low-paying and precarious employment in the informal rural economy, given that agriculture is the single largest employer in the world, especially in developing countries. Addressing these challenges is necessary for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 8, on decent work and economic growth, for young people.[16]

40. As the world shifts into the fourth industrial revolution, technological changes and advances are reshaping the future of work for young people, affecting both the quantity and quality of jobs.[17] Young people, who are often more knowledgeable about technology than older workers, have been increasingly utilizing skills in these areas to make a living, including through Internet-related employment, such as crowdwork, although such work often entails low wages and a lack of employment security. The skills needed to succeed in the workforce have also changed, with the demand for high-skilled workers, in particular in high-income countries, and low-skilled workers, especially in developing and emerging countries, increasing, while the need for middle-level skills has declined. New technology could contribute further to job polarization and increase inequalities.[15] Young people entering the workforce have their own set of challenges, and these can be exacerbated by this rapidly changing context. In some instances, technology can also support better working conditions, for example, in the case of the agricultural sector, in which new technologies may attract more rural young people to such work.[18] In addition, in response to the rapidly changing landscape, Member States have created policies and implemented programmes, with the support of private sector and international partners (i.e., the World Bank), to bolster youth employment, among other things.[19]

41. Mass migration, especially of young people, to urban centres has created challenges in terms of employment creation and the expansion of job-related services for them. In some countries with particularly high youth unemployment rates (e.g., Armenia and Greece), retaining human capital is also challenging because large numbers of qualified or skilled young people seek opportunities to study or work abroad, with many not returning. Some Member States have created initiatives to tackle this brain drain, which contributes to a shortage of experts in their countries (e.g., Slovakia).

42. Member States continue to emphasize youth employment in their national youth policies, action plans and strategies (e.g., India, Indonesia, Mauritania, the Philippines and South Africa) or have addressed young people in their national employment policies, strategies, legislation and plans (Iraq, Mozambique, Romania

[16] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all".

[17] International Labour Organization, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2017: Paths to a Better Working Future* (Geneva, 2017); World Bank, "The fourth industrial revolution", available at https://blogs.worldbank.org/taxonomy/term/15008 (accessed on 28 November 2018); Moninder Singh, Serge Kapoto and Devika Iyer, "Artificial intelligence and the future of our work", United Nations Development Programme, 11 January 2018, available at www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/blog/2018/ai-and-the-future-of-our-work.html (accessed on 28 November 2018); United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

[18] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Ending Extreme Poverty in Rural Areas: Sustaining Livelihoods to Leave No One Behind* (Rome, 2018), p. 33.

[19] See, for example, Mastercard Foundation, https://mastercardfdn.org/.

and Timor-Leste). Targeted policies, legislation, strategies or initiatives to address youth employment, including to support vocational and technical skills learning, were also newly developed, including with United Nations partners such as ILO (e.g., Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire, Mozambique, the Niger, Uganda and Uruguay), while others are in the process of being developed (Kazakhstan and Montenegro). In their effort to implement the 2030 Agenda, Member States have also established employment policies and programmes to support groups of young people who may be vulnerable to social exclusion, including by removing barriers and creating special targeted measures for inclusion (Rwanda and Uruguay).

43. Member States continue to promote youth entrepreneurship as an approach to generating employment opportunities and innovation (Cabo Verde, El Salvador, Jamaica and the Niger), including efforts at increasing social entrepreneurship, supported by legislation and policy. For example, Colombia passed youth employment and entrepreneurship legislation. Some young people, however, continue to be "necessity" or "subsistence" entrepreneurs, that is, those who are self-employed out of economic necessity because they have been unable to secure other employment and who are frequently part of the informal economy.

44. United Nations entities supported efforts to increase and improve youth employment, with emphases on decent jobs and the acquisition of skills for employment, either as key commitments of their entity's work or as part of specific policy or programme initiatives in response to related issues. Support was also provided for the development of stand-alone policies on young people and for the inclusion of an emphasis on young people in national employment legislation. Further information is available in section IV.

C. Gender equality and the empowerment of young women and girls

45. During the reporting period, gender equality and the empowerment of women garnered worldwide attention, with an emphasis on the discrimination or harassment faced by women and young women alike, including harassment in the workplace and sexual harassment.

46. Globally, young women continued to encounter and be disproportionally affected by challenges to their inclusion in all aspects of society. Significant barriers affecting their integration remain because of discriminatory laws, institutions and attitudes. Obstacles faced include early marriage and adolescent pregnancy, unequal pay for work of equal value, gender-based violence, political inclusion, unpaid care work, legal impediments and restrictions and securing employment and lower wages. With respect to health concerns, of the estimated 290,000 new HIV infections among young people in East and Southern Africa, two thirds occurred among young women.[20]

47. Gender equality is a stand-alone goal in the 2030 Agenda (Sustainable Development Goal 5), with key indicators regarding disaggregated data on the situation of young women (A/72/190, p. 19), and is crucial to the acceleration of sustainable development more broadly. There is growing recognition that the ability of young women to achieve their potential contributes to poverty reduction and the creation of more inclusive and peaceful societies. For example, while the needs of young women in conflict settings remain a global concern, there was an increased

[20] Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, *The Youth Bulge and HIV* (Geneva, 2018).

acknowledgement of the important role of young women as powerful agents of peace in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.[21]

48. Because of specific obstacles to their political participation, young women are often underrepresented as voters and in elected office and leadership roles. Member States have taken specific measures to address this, including implementing quotas for the participation of women in national youth councils and instituting programmes aimed at providing leadership, mentoring, scholarship and support to young women (Switzerland).

49. Globally, young women are more likely to be unemployed and undertake more unpaid work than young men.[15] While global averages indicate that gender parity in participation exists at all education levels (except tertiary), they disguise the fact that only 45 per cent of countries have achieved gender parity in lower secondary education and 25 per cent in upper secondary.[22] Girls and young women also face impediments to their education, with their access to schooling heavily restricted in many parts of the world because of poverty, cultural norms, conflict and unsuitable infrastructure. When in education, school-related gender-based violence can be underreported because it involves taboos. Women with disabilities face exclusions often associated with both gender and disability, thus compounding their challenges. Age, race and other aspects of identity can put some subgroups of women with disabilities at further risk of marginalization. Women not in education or employment, in particular, illustrate this compounded disadvantage, given that young women with disabilities tend to have the highest rates of exclusion.

50. Member States remain concerned about reducing discrimination against young women and ending harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage, and challenging stereotypes that help to perpetuate inequalities. To redress specific gender stereotypes, training for young men and boys on gender and new masculinities have been implemented. Several countries took steps to end child marriage, including by amending legislation (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Malawi and Trinidad and Tobago).

51. Addressing violence against young women remains a priority for Member States, and some have introduced national plans to guide their efforts, such as Australia's National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children for the period 2010–2022. Several countries eliminated laws that allow those who commit rape to escape punishment if they marry their victims (Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia). In 2016, Australia also instituted the national "Stop it at the Start" primary prevention campaign, which encourages influencers of young people to confront attitudes that support violence and, in turn, to generate long-term cultural change.

52. Young women in rural communities face greater challenges, including poorer health outcomes, difficulties in gaining access to affordable and quality care and detrimental effects of climate change and environmental degradation. Member States have sought to utilize ICT and connectivity in the empowerment of rural young people, for example, by using technology such as satellite television to teach children in the Amazon in Brazil and using an SMS-based literacy programme in Afghanistan

[21] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), *Young Women in Peace and Security: At the Intersection of the YPS and WPS Agendas* (New York, 2018).

[22] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2017/8. Accountability in Education: Meeting our Commitments* (Paris, 2017), p. xvi.

to target girls and young women who cannot travel easily beyond their home owing to social restrictions.[23]

53. Member States continue to support improved health outcomes for young women, including in relation to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Relevant approaches have included the provision of comprehensive sexuality education (e.g., in school curriculums), family planning services and facilities and services to prevent and treat sexually transmitted infections (Azerbaijan, Ghana, Indonesia, Kenya and Uruguay). In 2016, Uruguay adopted the intersectoral Strategy for the Prevention of Unintentional Pregnancy in Adolescents.

54. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people and others seen as gender non-conforming, too often experience bullying and violence and thus are at a higher risk of dropping out of school and of suffering low self-esteem, anxiety and depression. To achieve greater inclusivity of these young people, Canada and Germany allow persons to register as a third gender in official documents. Argentina developed a legislative framework to address sexual orientation and gender identity issues in education, while Ireland launched its LGBT National Youth Strategy for the period 2018–2020, which is the first of its kind in the world, to ensure a cross-governmental approach to address the key challenges faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people in order for them to achieve positive outcomes consistent with those of their peers.

55. At the global level, in 2017, the United Nations and the European Union initiated the multi-year Spotlight Initiative to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls through a United Nations multi-stakeholder trust fund. EQUALS, a multi-stakeholder global partnership for gender equality in the digital age founded by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), United Nations University and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), serves to build knowledge, efforts and resources so that women and girls can be equal participants in the technology revolution.

56. Many United Nations entities take a twin-track approach to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, addressing these as cross-cutting issues in their areas of work and undertaking targeted efforts. For example, the World Bank designs projects that focus on the promotion of gender equality. These have included situation analyses on keeping girls in school in Malawi and Zambia and the distribution of school tuition vouchers for vulnerable young woman in Pakistan. In 2017, UN-Women launched "Youth LEAP into gender equality" to empower young people to become partners in achieving gender equality. The sixty-second Commission on the Status of Women featured a youth dialogue, and discussions centred on challenges and opportunities to empower women and achieve gender equality for girls and young women, including those living in rural communities.

IV. Efforts by the United Nations to develop additional measures to support local, national, regional and international efforts on behalf of young people

57. United Nations entities continue to promote coherent and coordinated efforts towards the achievement of youth development objectives, including those set out in the World Programme of Action for Youth and the 2030 Agenda, and to encourage the inclusion of young people in global processes and sustainable development. To support these efforts, in 2017, Jayathma Wickramanayake was appointed the

[23] United Nations Children's Fund, *State of the World's Children 2017: Children in a Digital World* (New York, 2017).

Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth to strengthen advocacy and to help to realize the Secretary-General's vision for young people, which views them as a cross-cutting United Nations' priority. In September 2018, Ravi Venkatesan was appointed the UNICEF Special Representative of young people and innovation.

A. Renewed United Nations commitment to young people: United Nations Youth Strategy

58. The United Nations Youth Strategy envisions a world in which the human rights of every young person are realized, every young person is empowered to achieve his or her full potential and the agency, resilience and positive contributions of young people are recognized. The Strategy's objective is to increase impact and global, regional and country-level action to tackle the needs of young people and ensure their involvement in the 2030 Agenda and beyond. To strengthen the ability of the United Nations to deliver for young people, the Strategy is geared towards having the Organization become a "leadership example", "knowledge and innovation pioneer", an "investment and solution catalyst" and an "accountability leader". It also contains calls for the United Nations to strengthen its efforts in five priority areas: engagement, participation and advocacy; solid and healthy foundations; economic empowerment through decent jobs; young people and human rights; and peacebuilding and resilience-building.

59. The United Nations Youth Strategy provides an umbrella for inter-agency initiatives, such as the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth and Generation Unlimited, a global partnership launched by UNICEF, which is aimed at ensuring that every young person is in education, learning, training or employment by 2030. Launched in September 2018, the Secretary-General has designated his Envoy on Youth to lead the implementation of the Strategy, with the support of a steering committee.

B. Developments in young people and peace and security

60. In September 2018, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Peacebuilding Support Office launched the first study mandated by the Security Council in its resolution 2250 (2015). The study, entitled "The missing peace: independent progress study on youth and peace and security", was the culmination of intensive participatory research that engaged 4,200 young people through consultations and focus group discussions. A version of the study was presented to the Council in April 2018, and an open debate, which marked the first time that a debate was focused entirely on the positive contribution to the peace and security of young people, was held in the same month.

61. In the report, a number of stereotypes associating young people with violence are debunked, and it highlights how young people mobilize themselves to address violence. It is further noted in the report that, for societies to capture and support the contributions of young people and address the seismic challenges identified, it is critical to invest in the capacities, agency and leadership of young people, transform systems that reinforce exclusion in order to tackle structural barriers limiting youth participation in peace and security and prioritize partnerships and collaborative action, in which young people are seen as equal.

62. Recognizing the role of young people in building resilient and peaceful societies, Member States continue to collaborate with United Nations entities to implement Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) at the regional and country levels. For example, UNFPA implemented projects in Albania, Chile,

Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations is implementing the Young Peacebuilders Programme and summer schools in various regions of the world to strengthen the global movement of young peacebuilders, especially in countries in the Middle East and North Africa and the West Africa regions.

63. In line with Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018), as well as Sustainable Development Goal 16, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is implementing a project in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo and another one in , Kenya, Lebanon and Liberia, both aimed at strengthening the capacities of governments and youth organizations to engage, build trust and develop coalitions for the design and implementation of policies that contribute to conflict prevention and sustaining peace. Through a series of workshops and policy dialogues, the projects offer a holistic perspective that connects peace and security to sustainable development.

C. Youth Forum of the Economic and Social Council

64. The Economic and Social Council Youth Forum, organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and other United Nations and youth civil society partners, continued to serve as a platform for young people to engage in dialogue with Member States and to share their ideas on innovation, collective action and solutions to global problems. In 2017, it focused on the role of young people in poverty eradication and promoting prosperity in a changing world and, in 2018, on the role of young people in building sustainable and resilient urban and rural communities. On each occasion, the Youth Forum mirrored the Sustainable Development Goals covered at the high-level political forum on sustainable development that year. The Youth Forum is expected to be even more closely linked to the high-level political forum in the future.

D. Additional efforts for youth development undertaken by United Nations entities

65. The United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development continues to promote greater collaboration on youth development in the United Nations system, including by undertaking research and consultative efforts towards the development of the United Nations Youth Strategy in 2017 and early 2018. Forthcoming efforts include mainstreaming a youth development lens into specific goals to be reviewed at the high-level political forum on sustainable development by leveraging the Network's knowledge base to collaborate on research and analysis, with a view to developing evidence-based policy recommendations.

66. In 2017, International Youth Day focused on the theme of "Youth building peace" and was celebrated with an event led by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs at Headquarters in New York, in collaboration with the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development working group on young people and peacebuilding. In 2018, the International Youth Day theme was "Safe spaces for youth", centring on the need for available and accessible civic, public, digital and physical spaces for young people. The event, led by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), was held at the United Nations Office at Nairobi.

67. United Nations entities continue to enhance their technical and capacity-building efforts, providing support to Member States in their efforts towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2017, the Commonwealth

secretariat, along with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and eight other United Nations entities, organized a workshop on evidence-based policies on youth development in Asia to encourage dialogue on the sharing of good practices for evidence-based policies on young people in the region. A Development Account project by the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific resulted in the launch of a youth policy toolbox in November 2017.

68. With the aim of developing evidence-based crime prevention policies targeting distinct groups of young people at risk, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and UN-Habitat jointly implemented a project on safety audit processes in Colombia, Mexico and South Africa. In addition, UNODC focused on strengthening the capacity of law enforcement officials in investigating, apprehending and adjudicating travelling child sex offenders and perpetrators of online child sexual exploitation in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam.

69. Through research and the promotion of disaggregated data collection and analysis, United Nations entities continue to develop guidelines, training manuals, toolkits and comprehensive programmes closely aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and indicators (ILO, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO)). To inspire a new wave of activism on the HIV response, UNAIDS and ACT!2030, a youth-led social initiative, used research and data collection led by young people to establish accountability mechanisms for sexual and reproductive rights. Similarly, WHO supported the Global Accelerated Action for the Health of Adolescents (AA-HA!) approach to develop evidence-based, data-driven comprehensive plans for adolescent health and development in 61 country teams covering the period 2017–2018.

70. To facilitate the school-to-work transition, ILO carried out surveys in Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Peru with the aim of strengthening national education and training systems, while providing advisory services on youth employability, targeting the Middle East and North Africa and Latin America and Caribbean regions.

71. The most recent *World Youth Report*, focusing on young people and the 2030 Agenda, highlights the role of young people in the realization of the 2030 Agenda, including them as critical partners and participants in the design and implementation of the policies created to realize its implementation. The report includes a detailed statistical annex. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights published a report on young people and human rights (A/HRC/39/33), which sets out the human rights framework applicable to young people and outlines the challenges and discrimination that they face in having their rights recognized.

72. With the overall objective of building consensus among governments and furthering youth development, including access to education, health, employment and gender equality, many United Nations entities continue to promote a coordinated response to advance the inclusion of young people from vulnerable and marginalized backgrounds, especially those with disabilities, refugees and migrants and young women and girls (United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, UNFPA, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)).

73. United Nations entities (ILO, ITU, UNICEF, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and UNIDO) also provide support to Member States [illegible] skills to help them to adopt

entrepreneurship, skills building, training and enhancing a smooth school-to-work transition. In Africa, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), with support provided by ILO, adopted a youth employment promotion policy framework in 2016 to assist countries in realizing decent, secure and sustainable employment and entrepreneurship.

74. The Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth continued its efforts to mobilize global resources and knowledge to maximize the effectiveness of youth employment investment. As part of the Initiative, ILO and ITU led the Digital Skills for Decent Jobs Campaign in 2017 to encourage decent and inclusive employment opportunities under the 2030 Agenda, for which ITU developed a digital skills toolkit.

75. To enable better employment prospects at the national level, including for young people, ILO helped to establish employment service centres, provided certification for semi-skilled and skilled level construction workers in Jordan and introduced a model to upgrade informal apprenticeships in Yemen. To strengthen the collection of data, including for employment forecasts and analysis and for better designed youth-related programmes, ILO supported national statistics offices in Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. UNIDO launched Start & Grow, an online toolkit developed in collaboration with AIESEC International, with a view to helping young people to gain the skills needed to create and develop sustainable enterprises. UNIDO also partnered with UNCTAD to support the Government of Ethiopia in its efforts to build a nurturing and inclusive environment for self-employment that will benefit young people.

76. UNESCO continued its work towards adequate skills development, including by adopting a technical and vocational education and training strategy for the period 2016–2021 aimed at supporting Member States in enhancing their technical and vocational education and training systems in order to foster the skills required for employment, decent work, entrepreneurship and lifelong learning. In this context, UNESCO is implementing the Youth Employment in the Mediterranean project, funded by the European Union, to help to address youth unemployment in the region by improving skills anticipation and assessment systems and the quality and relevance of technical and vocational education and training and fostering regional cooperation. SADC is finalizing its second Strategic Framework for the period 2018–2027 on the development of technical and vocational education and training in the region.

77. UNFPA has worked jointly with partner agencies to support countries in the collection and analysis of disaggregated data on young people to develop national policies to address issues such as youth employment and helped to develop a National Youth Service Scheme in Sierra Leone, to be implemented in 2018, in order to engage young people in national service.

78. In addition to mobilizing 544 United Nations Youth Volunteers throughout the United Nations system in 2017, United Nations Volunteers has continued to support Member States in drafting youth-specific legislation and the establishment of national youth volunteer schemes, in addition to regional-level assistance to African Union Youth Volunteer Corps and the Economic Community of West African States Volunteer Programme in West Africa.

79. To ensure the health and well-being of children, adolescents and young people, United Nations entities (the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, UNFPA, UNICEF, the World Food Programme and WHO) have assisted countries in mainstreaming youth priorities into policy planning to effectively respond to the needs of their young populations. In 2017, WHO appointed an Adviser on Gender and Youth in the office of the Director General to signal a high-level commitment to youth needs. UNICEF, UNFPA and WHO partnered to advocate increased government

budget allocations towards reducing adolescent pregnancy. More than 100 countries have complied with this recommendation.

80. Several United Nations entities, including UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, work closely with youth-led organizations to ensure their inclusion in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects and policies that benefit them. The Office also works closely with the children and youth major group to involve young people in local platforms for disaster risk reduction.

V. Conclusion and recommendations

81. This report has highlighted progress made and ongoing challenges faced in realizing the Sustainable Development Goals for young people, as well as the World Programme of Action for Youth, with an emphasis on education, employment and gender equality. On the basis of the information and analysis provided above, the following recommendations are put forward for consideration by Member States.

(a) **Strengthen evidence-based national policies and programmes for young people, including by generating and using more robust disaggregated data on young people; support efforts to mainstream youth priorities across sectoral policies and ensure commitments with adequate resources for their implementation**;

(b) **Promote the full participation of young people and their organizations in political, social and development spheres and in decision-making at local, regional and global levels, including in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda**;

(c) **Redouble efforts towards the provision of quality education, especially to marginalized groups of young people, and ensure that learning helps to develop skills for the future of work and adequately comprises sustainable development education, conflict prevention and civic engagement**;

(d) **Develop and support initiatives, programmes and policies for the creation of decent jobs for young people, including targeting disadvantaged young people, and fostering partnerships for job creation and scaling up investment for youth employment, including green jobs**;

(e) **Systematically apply a gender-sensitive, age-sensitive and disability-sensitive lens to policies, programmes and legislative reform affecting young people to empower young women, respond to their needs and address discriminatory attitudes and practices that have an impact on their rights and agency**.